

HOW TO...

ENGAGE

With people more senior than you

**ROB BROWN, CONFERENCE SPEAKER
AND CONSULTANT ON TURNING
RELATIONSHIPS INTO PROFITS.**

No matter what a great company you work for and how fantastic your products are, success in sales comes down to one thing; one person truly engaging with another person. When we come up against a real seasoned professional in a pretty senior role, and what happens? We're intimidated, we lose our usual flow, we struggle to say the right things, we're asked questions we're not ready for and we end up blowing the relationship.

First impressions are like jelly – they set quickly. To persuade, you must be credible. And credibility rests on two pillars – trust and expertise.

Aside from the obvious 'do what you say you're going to do' and delivering quality products and services over time, how else can you build trust and win 'buy-in' from senior decision makers?

One way is to act against your own self-interest. A convicted heroin smuggler arguing how unfair the justice system is probably wouldn't persuade you. You'd see him as untrustworthy and biased. However, if he said the system was too soft and sentences were too short, might he influence you now?

Another way to induce trust is being honest. If you're paid on commission, say so. It encourages you to do a great job, right? If you're not the best in the market place, say so and turn it to your advantage. Remember Avis; 'we're no. 2. We try harder.'

To capitalise on your expertise, you need strong product knowledge, excellent testimonials from people your prospect can relate to, and a reputation that comes from profiling yourself wherever you can. This can be done though speaking, writing and holding office on various influential committees. A strong business network also helps.



Credibility is the starting point of influence and persuasion. It works for you on three levels.

- 1 PERSONAL** – selling yourself and showing your mastery of issues.
- 2 MENTAL** – selling your ideas, opinions and suggestions; with evidence if needed.
- 3 COMPANY** – selling everything behind and alongside you.

To build credibility be open and honest, and use any qualifications to promote status and expertise. If you do have to build a relationship from the ground up, rapport lays you some very quick and sturdy foundations. Small talk is big business and can be practised like any other skill. One of my favourite techniques is 'statement question'. Ask someone if they're going on holiday this year and you might sound like a hairdresser. For an opening reply to 'how are you?' try this instead;

"Great thanks! We've just booked a holiday in Norfolk this summer and we're really excited. Are you going away anywhere?"

This peels a layer off you and makes you friendlier, more human and less interrogative. ■

**For more great sales tips,
see www.rob-brown.com**

TOP TIPS

>> 1.

**BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR
PRODUCT'S FLAWS,
NEVER CLAIM MORE THAN
THEY WILL BELIEVE**

>> 2.

**BE OPEN AND HONEST,
AND USE ANY QUALIFICATIONS
TO PROMOTE STATUS AND
EXPERTISE**

>> 3.

**DON'T OVERSELL WITH
EXAGGERATED CLAIMS –
THEY WEAKEN THE REST
OF YOUR CASE**